

On page 14, between lines 17 and 18, insert as a heading --DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT(S)--.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Cancel claims 1-27 and insert the following new claims:

Sub. B1  
28. Device for eliminating unwanted volatile components from beer wort comprising a counter-current contact column for contact between an ascending current of steam or inert gas and a descending current of wort at a temperature near the boiling point of said wort at the pressure in the column, said column containing filler bodies to increase the surface area of contact within the column between the wort and the current of steam or inert gas, characterized in that the column comprises:

ai  
in a top part of the column, means for feeding and uniformly distributing the beer wort into said column, consisting of orifices through which the wort passes adapted to distribute regularly and uniformly the current of beer wort over all the transverse surface area of the column, and means through which the steam or the inert gas pass which are separate from the means through which the wort passes; and

in a bottom part of the column, means for feeding and uniformly distributing the current of steam or inert gas inside the column consisting of orifices through which the

Sub  
B1  
cont.

steam or the inert gas pass adapted to distribute regularly and uniformly the current of steam or inert gas over all of the transverse surface area of the column.

29. Device according to claim 28, characterized in that the means for uniform distribution of the wort comprise a distribution plate, a plane passing through said distribution plate being substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the column, said distribution plate being disposed under a wort feed into the column, at the level of the top part of said column, said distribution plate including first means for uniform flow of the wort in the descending direction and second means for flow of said current of inert gas or steam in the ascending direction.

30. Device according to claim 29, characterized in that the first means for uniform flow of the wort comprise a plurality of orifices in said distribution plate.

31. Device according to claim 29, characterized in that the second means for flow of said current of inert gas or steam comprise a plurality of chimneys on the surface of said distribution plate.

32. Device according to claim 31, characterized in that the chimneys have a height sufficient to prevent the

Sub  
B2

Sub B2  
cont.  
wort on top of said distribution plate flowing through said chimneys when the column is operating.

33. Device according to claim 28, characterized in that said filler bodies for increasing the surface area of contact of the wort with a current of inert gas or steam comprise a plurality of rings disposed randomly on a bottom plate and thereby forming a diffuse array of stacked rings, said diffuse array being located under said means for uniform distribution of the wort.

a1  
34. Device according to claim 33, characterized in that a plane passing through said bottom plate is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the column and said bottom plate has means for increasing the surface area of contact, said means being adapted to have a total surface area through which said current of inert gas or steam passes equal to at least 90% of the transverse surface area of the column.

Sub B2  
35. Device according to claim 34, characterized in that the bottom plate has corrugations over at least part of its surface and a plurality of orifices arranged on its surface.

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36. Device according to claim 33, <sup>wherein</sup> ~~characterized in~~  
~~that~~ the bottom plate is a corrugated grid.

Sub. B4  
37. Device according to claim 28, characterized in that the means for uniform distribution of a current of inert gas or steam comprise a main pipe, optionally communicated with secondary pipes, disposed at a level of a region from which the treated wort is extracted, in the bottom part of the column, and having a plurality of orifices, said orifices being regularly arranged on the greater part of the main pipe and the secondary pipes so that the current of inert gas or steam can be fed into the interior of the column over substantially all of the cross-section of said column.

a1  
B  
B  
38. Device according to claim 37, <sup>wherein</sup> ~~characterized in~~ ~~that~~ the orifices are directed towards the bottom of the column.

39. Device according to claim 28 further including means for collecting the treated wort without significant formation of foam.

Sub. B5  
40. Device according to claim 39, characterized in that the means for recovering the treated wort comprise at least one, preferably inclined surface directed towards the bottom of the column and in the bottom part of said column, said surface having means forming a baffle directed towards the bottom of said column.

41. Device according to claim 28, further comprising additional means for cleaning the interior of the column.

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a1  
42. Device according to claim 41, <sup>wherein</sup> ~~characterized in~~  
~~that~~ the cleaning means comprise a plurality of distributors of washing or rinsing liquid located at the level of the means for distribution of the wort, at the level of the means for increasing the surface area of contact of the wort with said current of inert gas or steam, at the level of the means for distributing a current of inert gas or steam, <sup>and</sup> at the level of the means for collecting the treated wort, said distributors being connected to external command and control means.

43. Device according to claim 28, further comprising a system for heating the wort before the wort enters the column, said heating system being connected to the column by pipe means.

44. Device according to claim 28, further comprising means for extracting the current of inert gas or steam.

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45. Device according to claim 44, <sup>wherein</sup> ~~characterized in~~  
~~that~~ the extracting means comprise at least one valve in the top part of the column for releasing the inert gas or the steam to the exterior of the column.

46. Device according to claim 28, further comprising means for recovering the current of inert gas or steam and condensates.

*P*  
*P*  
47. Device according to claim 46, <sup>wherein</sup> ~~characterized in~~  
~~that~~ the means for recovering the current of steam and condensates comprise at least one condenser connected to the top part of the column by pipe means.

*Sub C1*  
48. Device according to claim 28, further comprising means for regulating and/or controlling the flowrate of the wort entering the column.

*A1*  
49. Device according to claim 48, further comprising means for regulating and/or controlling the flowrate of the current of inert gas or steam into the column.

*P* *Sub C2*  
*B*  
50. Device according to claim 49, <sup>wherein</sup> ~~characterized in~~  
~~that~~ the regulation and/or control means comprise solenoid valves and/or pneumatic valves.

*Sub B6*  
51. Use of a device as claimed in claim 28 to carry out a method of eliminating unwanted volatile components from beer wort, without significant evaporation, comprising a first step of boiling the wort at a temperature in a range from approximately 90°C to approximately 150°C, followed by

*how to boil beans*